



mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 12
Number 3Article 4

4-15-1986

The Masque of the Silmarils [Drama]

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Recommended Citation

Beach, Sarah (1986) "The Masque of the Silmarils [Drama]," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 12 : No. 3 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol12/iss3/4>

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



Additional Keywords

Christine Lowentrout

The Masque of the Silmarils

Sarah Beach

Part I: Feanor

(Varda and Manwe alone, center stage)

VARDA

A silent dread envelopes Valinor,
the songs are stilled but not by peace or rest
From Oiolosse all I see is dark,
and our high place stands white in wide-spread gloom,
a sea of troubled shadow drawing round
and masking all in dead obscurity,
and even the Two Trees are lost to sight
What is this thing? What lies on Valinor?

MANWE

The wind is from the East and chill it blows
upon the face of hope, upon the Elves.
And trembling on the wind the hoar-frost cries --
Teleri wailing out their anguish cold --
come winging from the sea like stricken gulls.
For Melkor, in that Darkness beyond dark,
has come and gone and left his mark on all.
But hark! the hosts of Orome ride out,
and lamentation rises from below.

(Yavanna, Mandos, Nienna and Feanor enter)

YAVANNA

Hail, Varda! Thy bright stars still glimmer high
o'er all the darkened land. The air is clear.
But bare and black is fair Ezellohar.
What once was green has gone to bitter dust.
Alas! The Trees are darkened unto death,
their light has failed and all the limbs are dead!
If I but touch, they crumble 'neath my hand!
Now only does the light of the Two Trees
still burn within the stones of Feanor.
Salute him for his foresight, and his skill.
But hear me now, this many hearted grief!
E'en for the mighty of Iluvatar
some works are done but once in all the world,
and for myself, these Trees have been that world.
With joy of heart I sang their flow'ring life,
my one heart-song remembering Eru's light,
and not within the bounds of Ea twice
can I raise up that song, raise up that life.
And yet ... and yet, hope sighs, for but a bit,
a touch, of that pure fire might save the roots,
might save them from the dark decay and rot.
And were this done, then all our hurt is healed,
the Light of Joy would flow'r with Life once more
and Melkor and his malice be thrown down.

MANWE

O Son of Finwe, hearest thou these words?
And wilt thou grant what she would ask of thee?

(Feanor stands silent in thought as all look on him)

NIENNA

Speak thou, O Noldo, yea or nay! But who
would say her nay? For by her work your work

was given light. The greater cries in need.

MANDOS

Be still! Thou knowest not the thing we ask
of him, the bitter greatness of this deed!
Let him have peace for yet a little while!

FEANOR

Though I be less than thou, much less than thou,
e'en for the least there is some once done deed,
some heart's desire, some treasure, and some home.
The Stones, the Silmarils are such to me,
the light of all my life, of all desire.
Perhaps I could unlock my precious jewels,
let free their light into the Trees again.
But what of me? What of my heart's delight?
I cannot craft their likeness once again!
Were I to break them, my own heart would break,
and in that breaking I would then be slain,
the first of all the Eldar in Aman.

MANDOS

Yet not the first.

FEANOR

But look you as you stand.
a ring a solemn watchers, dark as death,
desiring this of me, this dreadful deed.
Yea, if the Valar would possess the Stones,
they are not safe at all, thus Melkor said.
And are you not as he, in thought and mind?
That thief shall cast a light on kindred thieves!
By my own will, I will not do this thing!
I do not choose to break my work, my art!
And if the Valar bend me to this deed
then truly they are known as Melkor's kin.
For nothing will I bend!

MANDOS

So thou hast said.

NIENNA

Alas! Where now is found the light of Joy?
The bitterness of woe in Arda walks!
Shall nothing made in Joy be free from dark?
A river of my tears may wash away
the stench of darkness clinging to the Trees,
but their fair light will shimmer not again,
no leaves, no blooms, no fragrance in the air,
and only locked in memory, locked in stone
shall Silver and the Gold still sing with light.
Alas for Valinor! Alas, Valmar!
The Blessed is unblessed! Delight is dark!
What grief to all who seek untroubled Joy!

MANWE

Grave tidings from the Noldor come to me!
For Melkor moves in darkness, and that dark
has crept into the house of Feanor,
and there before the doors is Finwe slain!

And Formenos is broken in that Dark!
The jewels are gone! The Silmarils are gone!

FEANOR

Ai! Morgoth! Morgoth! Melkor, hateful thief!
Black Foe of all the World! Thou liar vile!
For that which thou hast stolen, stones and life,
I curse thee by my limbs, my blood, my doom!
And Manwe, High and Mighty Lord of All,
curse thy vain summons, curse the deadly hour
that I forsook Formenos for this place!
My father Finwe slain, and I not there!

(Feanor exits abruptly)

YAVANNA

The well of grief is deep, and from that well
my tears flow seven-fold and uncontained,
for where now is the light of Valinor?
Shall darkness swallow up all that remains?
What evil has been done! What deeds! Alas!

VARDA

Alas, indeed! For more than the Two Trees
has Morgoth marred, for his foul hand has struck
at Feanor, and in that striking marred
his heart and mind, yet leaving him his strength.
He will enflame the Noldor to depart,
proud Feanor, in folly and in grief.
And grief and Doom shall fall upon his ways
and haunt the tracks of all who follow him.

MANWE

And yet if all his deeds are done to songs
and last until the last of Arda's days,
it shall be so, just as he proudly said.
The songs shall be accounted dearly bought
and yet they will be counted worth the price.
For even thus shall beauty unbeknownst
arise in Ea to delight all hearts,
and evil yet be good to have been so.

MANDOS

And yet remain this evil. Feanor
shall shortly burn his last and come to me.

(all exit)

Part II: Luthien

(Manwe and Varda alone, center stage)

MANWE

There is a weeping song in Mandos' Hall,
a tale of woe and separation grim,
and such the grief that lies within the voice
that Mandos calls to me.

VARDA

Let us be there.

(Mandos, Vaire, Luthien, and Beren enter)

BEREN

(taking Luthien's hands)
The starlight of your eyes which last I saw,

the nightingale singing in your voice,
those final things did bind me with your words,
and here I stayed until you came to me.

LUTHIEN

Beyond the light of day, beyond the moon,
beyond the singing of the silver stream,
beyond the dance of leaves, beyond all life,
I would not part with you so easily
as that which brought you here beyond the Sea.

MANDOS

Hail Manwe! Give me counsel of thine heart,
for grief moves all my thoughts. Here are these two,
one each from the two kindreds of the world,
whose fates are sundered by the Gift of Death.
Yet he delays, who should not still be here,
and she, whose grief has moved me, will not part
nor let him go, though he is Mortal kind.

VARDA

How comes this so? What tale lies on these two
that they should bend their fates to hold their love?

VAIRE

She is the daughter of fair Melian
and Elwe Thingol, King of Doriath.
And he is Beren, Mortal by his birth.
The tale that springs from them is wonderous strange,
and like to none which, woven in my webs,
hang all about us, here within these hall.
For they have freed one of the holy gems
which Morgoth stole and wears within his crown.

VARDA

The weight of many words lies on the Stones,
for they were hallowed by my hands and voice,
and too, the Oath of Feanor would bind
a deadly fate on anyone who held
a Silmaril. Come, Mortal, tell us how
thy life was brought to ending, brought to Doom.

BEREN

(bowing to the Valar)
Hail, Elbereth! whose stars do glimmer fair.
At thy command will I unlock my tale,
although the questing was of nought to me.
When weary from grim battle, I escaped
and found my way into fair Doriath,
I there beheld this maiden in the woods
and straightway I did love her beyond bounds.

LUTHIEN

I too was caught by love beneath the trees,
and little did we think of else beside.
But when before my father we two came,
we found that he would keep us from our love.

BEREN

A price he set upon her lovely hand,
which hath no price within the wide-spread realms.
For but a Silmaril he would allow
that we be wed. A scornful thing to do,
to set a price on her, a merchant's deed,
to prize the work of hands over her smile.
And yet, if that was all he asked for her,
it would be done. My doom lay in her eyes.

LUTHIEN

Through darkness and the death of many friends,
through trials and betrayals on our way,
we came at last to Morgoth's iron halls.

BEREN

(to Luthien)

Your song laid sleep upon the Dark Lord's host,
and even Morgoth, mighty though he be,
lost hold of consciousness and closed his eyes.

LUTHIEN

(to Beren)

Then it was done. You freed the shining gem,
and sweetly did its light fill all that place.
Your hand was like a lamp, yet pure and cool,
and for that sight all trials were small cost.

VAIRE

See how they lose the pathway of their tale!
That Elwe Thingol King did name the gem --
and his desiring carries dreadful doom --
and Beren sought it only for her hand,
these set the quest upon its wondrous course.
But what of all the deeds along the way?
Of Finrod and his oath to aid this man,
his contest and their grim imprisonment?
Of Luthien defying Thingol's word
by her escape to come to Beren's aid?
Betrayal by the sons of Feanor,
and loyalty from Huon, faithful hound,
are these not to be told? Are these forgot?

BEREN

If what we have we value more than life,
it does not mean we value life the less.
And death of friends, of Finrod Felagund,
of Huon, or the loss e'en of my hand,
all these are bitter losses to our hearts,
but not so bitter as the Doom of Death.

LUTHIEN

It is our grief our fates are Sundered thus,
and nothing in the world may compensate
the loss which Death does bring into our hearts.

MANDOS

Her grief is greater than all others' here,
it shines above the world, a bitter star,
and would that I knew how to give it rest.
Speak thou, O Manwe, of thine inmost thought!

MANWE

Hear then O Luthien, this gift of choice.
Thy labors have been great, and so thy griefs,
a wonder even here in Mandos' Halls.
Because of these, release from Mandos' care
would then begiv'n to thee, and thou wouldst dwell
e'en to the world's far ending in Valmar,
and live in joy, forgetting all thy griefs,
companion to the Valar to the last.
But Beren cannot come, to join thee there,
for he is mortal born, beyond our power,
and we may not withhold the gift of Death,
the gift Iluvatar bestowed on men.
The second choice is this: to once turn back
and walk again the lands of Middle-earth,

and with thee taking Beren, both to live
subjected to the fates of Mortal life.
No certainly of life and none of joy
is promised in this second choice of thine,
for thou wouldst then be Mortal and like him
be subject to a second Mortal death.
And in a shortened time thou shalt be dead
and leave the world indeed for ever more,
and all that thou in life hast been wilt be
the failing words of song and memory.

LUTHIEN

This then I choose to Mortal be with him.
For then beyond all griefs, beyond all bounds,
our fates would lie together beyond Death.

MANWE

Then be it so, O Children of the World.
(Luthien and Beren exit)

Thus do the Elven peoples loose a child,
the fairest of their kind, a living light.

VARDÁ

And yet, by her, are the Two Kindreds joined,
and she shall be the mother of a line
which shall give hope to those who dwell in dark.

MANDOS

But Thingol shall receive a bitter fate;
his daughter, greatly loved shall, Mortal, die.
And he himself shall lose the light of joy
and be cut down. The Silmaril will shine
before his dying eyes, held by the hands
which wrought his life's defeat. Such is the fate
of all who place desire upon those gems.
(all exit)

Part III: Earendil

(Varda, Manwe, Vaire, and Mandos, center stage)

VARDÁ

In Tirion I see a moving light,
a drifting shimmering of diamond dust,
and surely there is one who calls aloud,
whose voice runs seeking through the empty streets.
And there is that about him which recalls
the mingling of the lights of the Two Trees.

MANWE

Indeed, it seems to be one of those gems,
the work of Feanor, a Silmaril.

VARDÁ

Go thou, O Mandos, to our visitor
and bring him to our celebration ground.
(Mandos exits)

VAIRE

A tale is woven round this newcomer,
with threads of Mortal and of Elven kind.
A child of the Two Kindreds comes to us.
(Mandos and Earendil enter)

MANWE

Earendil, famed mariner, all hail!
 The looked for that arrives at unawares,
 the longed for that appears beyond all hope!
 All hail Earendil, he who bears the light
 which shone before the Sun and silver Moon!
 The Splendour of the Children of the Earth,
 a star within the dark, the sunset's jewel,
 a radiance to light the morning gloom.

EARENDIL

The years are long since first I sought this place,
 and sailing back and forth across the seas
 brought me no nearer to admittance here.
 And mists of shadows always turned me back
 until my heart was weary of the waves.
 Through darkness came a bird with this fair gem,
 and losing strength, it slept within my arms.
 Yet in the morning, there I found my wife.
 The news she brought laid grief on grief untold
 and had I been alone, I would have stopped,
 there ending all my quest, a sailor lost.
 But by this light, the message that I bear
 was kept alive -- by light and Elwing's love.
 And so I come, to speak for Men and Elves,
 and beg you hear our plea. Our life is grim!

MANWE

Speak on then, mariner.

EARENDIL

Black Morgoth grinds
 our lives to bitter dust, til Men and Elves
 are lost in dark despair and hollow woe.
 and so I cry your pardon for the Elves,
 the Noldor who once fled from Valinor.
 Their sorrows have been great and dearly bought,
 and worthy of your pity and your aid.
 For though we strive, our might is not enough
 to keep the shadowed host that Morgoth rules
 from ravaging our lands. We labor through
 our sorrow, with no hope except that thou
 shouldst succour us in our great need and grief.
 For Morgoth, is he not one of your kind?
 How can we hope to stand against his power?
 We shall be lost and darkness shall abide,
 unless you come at last to stand with us.

MANWE

Till one had come to speak for Men and Elves
 we stayed our hands. But now that thou hast come
 we shall arise and gather up our might.

EARENDIL

(bowing)

Then hope may rise again in weary hearts.
 But as for me, I beg that I might have
 your leave to seek my wife. For once again
 we parted, and my heart now longs to be
 content with her.

VARDA

Then seek thy lady out.

(Earendil exits)

MANDOS

Shall Mortal Man the lands undying walk
 and yet retain his life?

VARDA

Yet Earendil
 was born into the world to do just this.
 And answer truly: is he Earendil
 the son of Tuor born of Hador's line,
 or son of Idril, Turgon's daughter fair,
 the Elven House of Finwe claiming him?

VAIRE

For surely thou hast seen upon our walls
 the woven tale of Gondolin the fair
 how Earendil first was born and raised
 among his Elven kindred. At its fall
 his people joined with those from Menegroth,
 and still among the Elves he lived until
 his faring forth upon the silver sea.

MANDOS

And what then of the Noldor, who went forth
 to exile willfully? They may not here
 return.

MANWE

The power of doom is giv'n to me
 in this. Go thou, O Mandos, and return
 to us with Elwing and with Earendil.
 Their doom I shall pronounce.

(Mandos exits)

The peril he
 has ventured for the sake and for the love
 of the Two Kindreds shall not fall upon
 Bright Earendil, nor shall't fall upon
 his Elwing, who has followed him into
 this peril for her love of him. But they
 shall walk no more among the Elves and Men
 in Outer Lands.

(Mandos enters, followed by Earendil and Elwing)

This then is my decree:
 to Elwing, Earendil, and unto
 their sons, shall leave be given to each to choose
 to which kindred their fates be joined, and too
 under which kindred they shall then be judged.

EARENDIL

(to Elwing)

For many years I journed far and wide,
 and heavy lies the weight of grief on me.
 Choose thou, for I am weary of the world.

ELWING

This then shall be my choice: among the Elves,
 the Firstborn Children of Iluvatar.
 I chose this fate because of Luthien,
 in order that the Elves not lose her line.

EARENDIL

(to Elwing)

Then for thy sake, I shall be counted so.

MANWE

Then be it so. But hear this doom on you:
 for entering to Valinor uncalled
 your lives are sundered from the lands you knew
 and you shall dwell with us in this fair land.

VARDA

Since thou, Earendil, hast so journeyed here
beyond all hope, thou shalt become a sign
of hope to those who dwell beyond the sea.
The Silmaril be bound upon thy brow,
thy ship prepared to sail across the skies,
and as a star thou shalt lift up the hearts
of all who gaze on thee.

VAIRE

Now all thy quests,
which empty seemed to thee, become the shades,
the flying echoes of this nightly voyage.
And to all questors and to all who weep,
despairing of all hope of reaching home,
thy constant crossing of the darkened sky
shall call them to continue on their ways.

ELWING

And when at dawn thy ship returns once more,
I shall put on the form that Ulmo gave,
and, flying on white wings, rise up to thee,
to welcome thee back to this safe haven.

MANWE

Now let us gather up our host and rise
with rescue for the Men and Elves who dwell
beneath the heavy hand of Morgoth's might.
(all exit)

Part IV: Maglor

(Manwe, Varda, Vaire, Yavanna center stage)

MANWE

The Iron Crown of Morgoth shines no more.
The captive gems are freed, their prison house
now beaten to a collar for the neck
of him we once named Melkor. Now the chain
Angainor binds him close, as once before --
his humbled head bowed down upon his knees.

VAIRE

Such tales I have to weave of that great fall,
the breaking of Anfauglith, when the North
was all ablaze with light of arms and war.
The mountains rang beneath our shining feet
as we and all our hosts rose from the West.
The creatures of the shadow host were crushed;
the Balrogs were destroyed, the orcs like straw
did perish as if cast upon a fire.

YAVANNA

'Tis well that we have broken Morgoth's power.
But look thou to the cost: fair lands now lie
beneath the waves, and Sirion is gone.
Beneath the waters cold and dark they sank
and all their trees and plants are lost to light.

VARDA

But think thou of the night the dragons came,
released by Morgoth as a last resort.
They drove us back with darkness on their wings,

the roll of violent thunder, and their fire
of burning red which fell like tempest rains.
Then came Earendil in fair Vingilot
shining through dragon-gloom with flames of white,
and with him all the great birds of the skies,
Thorondor leading them. All through the day
and night in darkness and in doubt they fought,
and hearts were stilled with wond'ring who would win.
Before the sun rose in the eastern sky,
Ancalagon the Black was slain at last,
the greatest of the dragons Morgoth loosed.
Earendil's hand it was who killed the beast,
and, cast down from the sky, the dragon fell
to break the stones of Thrangorodrim's towers.

MANWE

Then were the pits of Morgoth opened wide,
unroofed and broken, leaking in the Sun.
And as we and our host descended deep
into the earth, yet Morgoth stood at bay,
'though cowardly, unvaliant he remained.
He fled as far into his deepest mines
as he could go, then turned to sue for peace,
to cry for pardon for his heartless deeds.
His feet were hewn from under him, and he
was hurled upon his face, upon his knees.

VAIRE

See where Eonwe comes, who guards the gems,
the Silmarils we freed from Morgoth's crown.
(Eonwe enters)

EONWE

Hail Manwe, mighty lord of all this host,
Thy word has been delivered to the Elves,
the summons to depart from Middle-earth.

MANWE

Then we shall leave to thy charge all the host
and go before them into Valinor
to order all against their coming thence.

EONWE

Then be it so.

(Manwe, Varda, Vaire, Yavanna depart)

Now all the host is camped
and resting from the war before they leave.
But see where one approaches onto me.
It is one of the sons of Feanor,
one of the two who yet remain alive.

(enter Maglor)

I greet thee Maglor, son of Feanor.

MAGLOR

In thought my brother Maedhros and myself
have pondered long what path we should pursue,
for still our Oath doth bind us, hard and fast.
And now we must attempt, though in despair,
to claim our own, the Silmarils, e'en though
we stood against the host of Valinor,
we stood alone against all of the world.
We bid thee now yield up those precious jewels
which Feanor our father made of old
and which were stolen from him by Morgoth.

EONWE

I say to you, the right, which formerly
the sons of Feanor possessed, to claim
the Silmarils has perished now. Your deeds,
your many and quite merciless actions
which you performed while blinded by the Oath --
and most of all the slaying of Dior,
and too the assault made on the Havens --
all these have voided all your former claims.
The light of all the Silmarils shall go
now to the West, to shine again where it
began. To Valinor must you return,
and there abide the judgement given out
by all the Valar, for it is by their
decree alone that I shall yield the jewels
(Eonwe exits)

MAGLOR

I know quite well what Maedhros will decide,
for though I would submit, his heart will not.
The Oath says not that we may not abide
and wait, and it may be that there, in time,
all shall be well forgiven and forgot,
and we shall come into our own in peace.
But my heart carries now a foreboding
that this counsel will not sway Maedhros' mind.
But night is falling now and I must go
inform my brother of Eonwe's words.

(Eonwe enters as Maglor exits)

EONWE

The host lies deep in sleep beside these shores,
awaiting their departure to the West,
and in the sky above them sails the star,
the Silmaril Earendil doth bear.
Beyond our hope the light of the Two Trees
shall come again in joy to Valinor
and the three gems which Feanor did make,
and Varda hallowed with her blessed hands,
shall bring delight to all who view them there.
But what is this? There is the sound of death,
and all the camp is rising now in arms!
The guardians who watched about the gems
lie slain, their blood now blackening the soil,
and those two gems are stolen, snatched away!
The sons of Feanor have done this deed!
Yet this I charge: Let no one raise their hand to
strike the fleeing pair! Let them escape.
Let no more blood be spilt for those two gems!
Keep clean the mem'ry of their pristine light,
for no joy shall the brothers have of them!
Let go of them, and turn your faces West
and enter into Valinor with joy!

(As Eonwe exits, Maglor reenters)

MAGLOR

If only Maedhros had but given heed!
In madness we reclaimed the Silmarils
and took them in a deed that echoed back
to where the bloody conflict had begun.
But that pure light was such we could not hold.
Eonwe had spoke truly when he said
our right was forfeit and the Oath in vain.
So Maedhros, lost in anguish and despair,
yet still unwilling to release his stone,
has cast himself into a fiery crack
and lost within the earth is that bright gem.
And I could not endure the pain of mine,

the joy of its fair light quite overwhelmed
by anguish in my blood. It too is gone.
I cast it in these waves. Its light is drowned.
And yet the memory sings in my blood.
I cannot have it, yet I cannot leave.

(to the audience)

A tale I'll tell of craftsmanship and art,
of passion to possess the work of hands,
of beauty that was made, and beauty caught,
and beauty hallowed for the world's delight.
I'll tell of how the world's delight became
the bane of its possessive maker's House,
and how the doom of the three well-wrought gems
brought low the kingdoms of Beleriand.
And while I yet have breath, here I'll remain
and sing, beside the sea, of all these things --
the loss of home, of life, of love, of joy.
The heart of rashness lies within us all,
and rashly to possess or swear by oath
has brought unnumbered woes upon the world!
My heart is brimming o'er with all this woe,
and it shall haunt me now, where'er I go.

(end)



GRATEFUL THANKS

Mythlore wishes to express its gratitude to Lisa and Robert Cowan for coming to its aid for issues 43, 44, and 45 in the preparation of the mailing labels. Without their help we would have encountered many more problems and delays. Mythlore also thanks the Cowans for assistance given to Christine Lowentroun searching for computer programs, as she will soon be taking over the maintenance of the mailing list.

Please remember to let us know when you move, as much in advance as possible. This will keep your issues coming to you smoothly, and relieve us of resending your copies of Mythlore.